Pal. Poli. Rome Decr 6th 1872

My dear Tom

I'm thinking of you continually now that you have got into the dismal winter but you have the consolation of your dear ones about you & in your last you pitied me in being alone, now I am glad to have rec'd this, (excuse my writing for I am just up from a fever & my hand & head don't quite agree) and the change I find very comfortable & perhaps more so as I was longing for this change but I did not know how to bring it about, when to my good fortune my excellent Doctor of Tolfa with his wife & sister made the proposition to keep house with me & take all the management & responsibility leaving me rent free

He proposed that I should pay him 4. 2 a day for every thing, which considering how dear every thing is in Rome I think moderate — He has taken all my superfluous furniture & 'tis now 3 months that I have not had to pay as I'm eating up the said furniture

As during 6 years I had lived with them at Tolfa during the summer months, so I presumed that I knew them well enough as to enter into such a plan with confidence, but whether or no, I had no choice for my case

as regards my health & strength
for I felt that sooner or later I must have some one
with me & so it fell out, for I was taken suddenly with a
terrible fever, but had the good fortune of the medical fr
at my elbow & so he soon patched me up & perhaps even
saved my life – For this fever had been very prevalent
& fatal in Rome but as I arrived in October when it is
thought that all fevers had ceased, so I was quite taken
by surprise – I had just been walking for 2 hours very
pleasantly, feeling quite recovered & had even been
painting in the early mor. when down I was dashed
But I am picking up very nicely & am equal to all
my duties which I'm glad to say are few & pleasant.
My house is being made into two for it was a sad
length & I am getting a new staircase with a long
balcony for flowers, a great improvement, but the rent
will be raised from £80 to £110 & I am trying how to
pay a moderate rent as my fr did not reckon on this
rise, but 'tis my fr opposition & not his
he is now practising & think will succeed but his
task is a heavy one & I feel a little fidgety lest he should
he should not be able to come up to the mark
My position now is very pleasant if it lasts but alas & alas

befall every one & yet I always think that I am fortunate & perhaps presume on it, as in this case

Our weather has been fearfully wet & the inundations are going on tho' not yet in Rome, this against me & I am still weak tho' I can do 2 & almost 3 miles respectably

They speak of me as being very clever & even cunning in all affairs for on the finish of my Consulate I offered my large house to set up an Archæological Institute & the society caught at it at once, but I proposed to have 3 rooms rent free, the thing failed, but the rent was paid & so I am thought to have been more cunning than the society — The Doctor has proposed just the same plan

We are all on tip toe expecting the Parliament to upset all the Convents & Monasteries at once, the Pope threatens to excommunicate all the 3 thousand Nuns in the Vatican Palace but he'll have to put em in Breeches, the monks have been long in Petticoats, nobody can tell how it will finish, I myself don't believe the Pope will ever leave that splendid Vatican he may talk but its all brag — How wonderful that at last it should all come to an end

There's a great panic just now that the English bank will come, the weather, the politicks, & the fevers cause

My dear Tom here I'm giving you another sheet of gossip, it being my birth day, this is my pleasantest way of passing it to chat with you, what a pity that we cannot celebrate the occasion with a goblet of Wine — as yet I have not told my picture of the miracle of the Wine on which I have been dwelling on & off these 9 years, but indulging myself in studying it in every way — There are 25 figures, they dine under a "pergola" a vine arbour — As the water pours out into the jar I show it changing half way into Wine, a ray of the Sun passes thro it, & a group observe it with amazement — The Vine forms a good back ground, with its autumnal tints & grapes — Gentle sun rays fall upon the table cloth, the idea is quite original & I confess I am proud of it & hope to be able to write with my name that it was finished in my 30th year!! I think it is very attractive except that people try to think it a copy as a Consul can only do copies!!

The Legation & Sir A. Paget I have nothing to do with except when I draw my pittance when they do every thing to show how they try to cut me — for as yet they are not permitted to go to the Vatican, & march under the fact

I have all the privileges of an Ambassador & they cannot get one.

We had an Bishop to dine yes. 14th the dinner was better than the Bishop for he could not carry on a conversation yes. 4 I walked for an hour gallantly & am picking up in good style with the hope of seeing you all next Summer & that not the lack of strength but of cash may be the drawback.

With love to all

Your loving brother Joe

Dec 16th. 1872

you all here for me, & I hope still for years to be preserved to you all, but who can tell

I am afraid you have to work very hard & late at night & get you preserve your health by your temperance. Maria always tells me about you & your wife, but as we are all going down hill, we cannot expect much

As I suffer so much from cold I am afraid my project of seeing you all next Summer may be difficult but it will depend on my finding a good fellow companion for I could not attempt such a ride alone.

Our Music here is very bad, even the Opera is a failure, the Waltzing band very poor it passes my window only every day

Remember me kindly to your dear wife who I hope may still remember me

Your loving brother Joe